

REMARKS:

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-8 were rejected. Claim 5 has been amended. New claims 9 and 10 have been added. Thus, claims 1-10 are now pending and under consideration. No new matter has been added. The rejections are traversed below.

OBJECTION TO THE DRAWINGS AS FILED:

On page 2 of the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner indicates that the drawings as filed are acceptable for examination and publication purposes.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a):

Claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,937,391 (Ikeda).

The Examiner solely relies on Ikeda as teaching the features recited in claims 1-8 of the present application. The U.S. filing date of Ikeda is May 29, 1997 and Ikeda claims a benefit of a foreign filing based on Japanese Application No. 8-182556 filed on July 11, 1996.

The present application was filed on July 26, 2003 and claims a benefit of a foreign filing based on Japanese Patent Application No. 5-82905, filed on April 9, 1993. Further, the present application also claims priority of parent application Serial No. 08/187,543, filed on January 28, 1994.

Accordingly, because Ikeda was filed *after* the present invention was made (i.e., the earliest date of July 11, 1996 of Ikeda is after the date of both parent application Serial No. 08/187,543 and Japanese Patent Application No. 5-82905 upon which the present application relies), Ikeda does not qualify as a prior art reference under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that Ikeda be removed as a reference.

NEW CLAIMS:

New claims 9 and 10 are added herein. Proper support for new claims 9 and 10 can be found at least at paragraph 239 of the present application.

CONCLUSION:

In accordance with the foregoing, the Specification and claim 5 are amended, and reconsideration of all outstanding rejections is respectfully requested.

If there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested

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to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

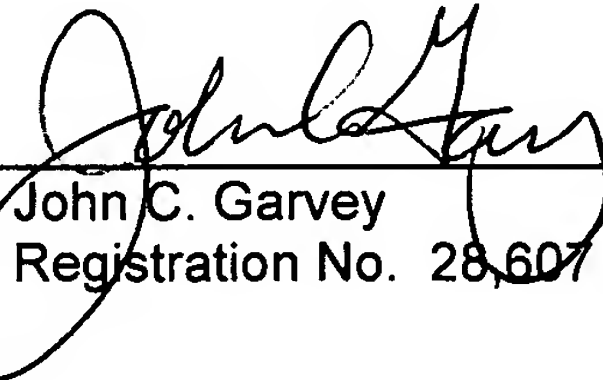
Respectfully submitted,

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4-27-06

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